

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE KIDS

February 2001

Lassen Children & Families Commission Newsletter

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"America's Child Care Crisis: A Crime Prevention Tragedy" A Report From FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a national anti-crime organization led by police chiefs, sheriffs, police organization leaders, prosecutors and crime survivors, released "America's Child Care Crisis: A Crime Prevention Tragedy," a comprehensive analysis of recent research on the child care crisis in the U.S. The report demonstrates the importance of the first 5 years of life in shaping future attitudes, behaviors and potentially even a child's propensity towards violent behavior.

The study found, however, that many programs designed to help young children are currently under funded:

- Head Start, the principle federal child development program for children in poverty, serves half of eligible children.
- The Child Care and Development Block Grant, designed to help low-income parents with child care costs, serves one out of 10 eligible children.

Many working parents—especially low-and moderate-income parents—cannot find adequate child care, and if they find it, often cannot afford it. According to the study, placing two children in a child care center can cost more than \$12,000 a year—about \$2,000 more than full-time minimum wage—and care in a quality urban child care center can exceed the cost of tuition at a public university. The report found that while the price of quality child care is high—the cost of not providing it is higher. Research shows that quality educa-

tional child care can greatly reduce the risk that infants and toddlers will become violent teens and adults. A poll of police chiefs found that 9 of 10 agree that if the U.S. does not make greater investments in after-school and educational child care programs now, crime and welfare costs will result. When rating strategies on their value as crime prevention tools, police chiefs rate educational child care as significantly more effective than more traditional alternatives such as building juvenile centers or installing metal detectors at school.

Overwhelming evidence demonstrates that investments in child care save money:

- For every dollar spent on the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program, the public saved more than \$7.
- Compared to those who had attended all-day kindergarten but not the pre-school and parent coaching program in Chicago Child-Parent Centers, CPC children had 26 percent greater high school graduation rates, were held back in school 35 percent less, and were less than half as likely to have been arrested two or more times as a juvenile.
- A 1997 study by Mark A. Cohen of Vanderbilt University estimated that "each high-risk youth prevented from

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Home Away from Home: Determining What Type of Child Care is Right for Your Family

The Lassen County Children and Families Commission knows that selecting the right person to care for your child takes patience, time and research. Because your child may spend much of his or her day under a provider's care, it is important that the provider is not only trustworthy, but also someone who can nurture, comfort and teach your child while you are away.

There are many types of child care providers, from child care centers to in-home care. When looking for a caregiver, the Lassen County Commission recommends parents determine the following information:

- What is the provider's previous experience and history with child care?
- How long has the provider been at his/her current location and why did he/she leave previous jobs?
- Is the provider warm and caring with your child?
- What types of activities are scheduled for the children?
- Is the environment comfortable for both the children and the providers, with age appropriate and safe equipment and materials?
- Are there small groups of children with each provider and does the provider kneel or sit at the children's level?
- How does the provider handle emergencies?
- What is the provider's approach to discipline?
- Are references available and supportive of the facility?

Lassen Child & Family Resources, our local child care resource and referral agency, can help you ask questions that will guide you to quality, affordable care in a variety of settings. Don't be afraid to interview providers and observe them as they interact with your child. For further information on Lassen Child & Family Resources see the article on page three.

Once you have found a good provider, develop a partnership with him or her in your child's development. Have regular meetings with the provider to get updates on your child's activities and progress. You should also share relevant information about your home life. This will give your provider a greater understanding of what's happening in your child's life—which may help explain behavior.

The Lassen County Children and Families Commission is funded by Proposition 10, a statewide initiative approved in 1998 to fund education, health and child care programs for children prenatal to age 5.

*The conscience of children is formed
by the influences that surround them;
their notions of good and evil are the
result of the moral atmosphere they
breathe."*
Richer



Lassen Child & Family Resources

336 Alexander Avenue, Susanville

257-9781

Child Care Referrals

- Free referrals to licensed child care services in Lassen County
- Information for parents on choosing child care appropriate to their needs

Child Care Provider Assistance

- Assistance in the licensing process
- Referrals to your program
- On-going support and information on curriculum activities and materials, record keeping, parent-provider contracts and other areas of technical assistance

Subsidized Child Care

- Financial assistance may be available for income-eligible families who are working, in school or training programs on a space available basis

Trustline Registry

- Information and assistance in the registration process is available for individuals wishing to provide care for the children of one family

Resource Lending Library

- The resource lending library consists of games, toys, books and videos for children to be checked out for a two week period at no cost

R.A.I.N.B.O.W. Family Resource Center

- Offers resources and other assistance to families with high risk, developmentally delayed or disabled children. Services include parent support groups, information on disabilities, parent & professional collaboration and referrals to resources. The 1-800-WARMLINE is available for program access.

A program of the Lassen County Office of Education

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adopting a life of crime could save the country between \$1.7 million and \$2.3 million.”

William Gale and Isabel V. Sawhill of the Brookings Institution write, “Investing in early childhood education provides government and society with estimated rates of return that would make venture capitalists envious.” The Fight Crime: Invest in Kids report finds that early childhood programs are among the best investments government can make.

(reprinted from the California Children & Families Commission Update October/November 2000 edition)



Coming Events

First Thursday of each month, the Lassen Children and Families Commission meets at 1345 B Paul Bunyan Road, Susanville. Meetings are open to the public. Call 257-9600 for more information.

Applications for Mini Grants are available. Call 257-9600 to receive an application form or stop by at 1345B Paul Bunyan Road.